

Message Text

SECRET

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ACTION SS-25

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O R 231251Z JAN 76

FM AMEMBASSY RABAT

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S E C R E T RABAT 0374

EXDIS

DEPT PLS PASS TO SECRETARY'S PARTY

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR PBOR MO MR AG UR SS

SUBJECT: KING HASSAN RECEIVES COMMANDER OF SIXTH FLEET

1. SUMMARY. KING'S DOMINANT THEME IN JAN 22 AUDIENCE WAS THAT HE VIEWS AREA (MOROCCO, MAURITANIA, SAHARA AND ALGERIA) AS BEING IN A "PRE-ANGOLA" CONFIGURATION. USSR, WHILE INCREASINGLY SUPPLYING ALGERIA MILITARILY, HAS PERHAPS NOT YET DECIDED HOW FAR TO GO, IN KING'S VIEW. HOWEVER, AFTER EXPECTED (BY KING) SOVIET SUCCESS IN ANGOLA, USSR LIKELY TO LOOK FOR NEXT TARGET AND MIGHT BE TEMPTED TO CHOOSE THIS AREA. THEREFORE, QUICK SUPPORTIVE ACTION BY MOROCCO'S FRIENDS PLUS SELECTIVELY ENHANCED U.S. VISIBILITY WOULD HELP TO DETER SOVIET ADVENTURISM, IN KING'S ASSESSMENT. KING ASKED ME THAT HIS VIEWS BE PASSED EXPEDITIOUSLY TO THE SECRETARY. END SUMMARY.

2. SETTING: KING RECEIVED VICE ADMIRAL TURNER, COMMANDER OF SIXTH FLEET, FOR AUDIENCE IN FEZ JAN 22. I SAT IN, ALONG WITH MOROCCAN AMBASSADOR TO U.S. BOUTALEB, ROYAL PROTOCOL CHIEF GENERAL MOULAY HAFID AL-ALAOUI, AND MOROCCO'S SAHARA GOVERNOR BENSODA. KING'S MOOD WAS FRIENDLY BUT SERIOUS. WHILE HE SPOKE IN HIS USUAL SOMEWHAT ELLIPTICAL STYLE, THRUST

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OF HIS MESSAGE WAS CLEAR. HIS MAIN EMPHASIS WAS ON SOVIET

THREAT, ALTHOUGH HE OBVIOUSLY HAD MORE DIRECT ALGERIAN HOSTILITY VERY MUCH IN MIND. (VADM TURNER HAS SUBMITTED DETAILS OF DISCUSSION AND HIS RECOMMENDATIONS THROUGH NAVAL CHANNEL TO CINCUSNAVEUR IN COMSIXTHFLT MESSAGE 221628Z JAN 76.)

3. DETAILS: KING OPENED MEETING BY STRESSING THAT U.S. AND MOROCCO SHARED COMMON INTEREST AND OUTLOOK AND HAD ALWAYS ENJOYED FRIENDLY AND STRAIGHTFORWARD RELATIONS. GOIN ON TO COMMENT AT SOME LENGTH ON SOVIET THREAT TO AFRICA, KING ELABORATED ON THEME THAT MOROCCO "SURROUNDED" BY PRO-SOVIET REGIMES. HE CITED ALGERIA AND LIBYA, WHICH, HE SAID, WERE ACQUIRING LARGE QUANTITIES OF SOPHISTICATED WEAPONS FROM USSR. IN ADDITION TO MOROCCO, HE SAW ONLY "TINY" TUNISIA AND EGYPT RESISTING SOVIET INROADS. HE ALLUDED TO POSSIBILITY OF FUTURE CUBAN AND VIETNAMESE ROLE IN SUPPORT OF SOVIET AFRICAN POLICY, AT SAME TIME EXPRESSING STRONG CONCERN OVER DETERIORATING SITUATION IN ANGOLA. SOVIET SUCCESS THERE SEEMED TO BE BECOMING INCREASINGLY LIKELY, IN HIS VIEW, AND WOULD TEMPT SOVIETS TO TRY THEIR HAND ELSEWHERE.

4. MAURITANIA, KING CONTINUED, WAS ESPECIALLY WEAK AND MIGHT WELL BE THE NEXT SOVIET TARGET. NOTING THAT MOROCCAN FORCES CURRENTLY FIGHTING IN MAURITANIA, AT LATTER'S REQUEST, KING RECOUNTED THAT A MOROCCAN F-5 HAD BEEN SHOT DOWN WITH LOSS OF CREW PREVIOUS DAY BY POLISARIO USING SAM-6 MISSILE. (COMMENT: HE MAY HAVE MEANT SAM-7.) A C-130 HAD ALSO BEEN STRUCK BY SIMILAR MISSILE, BUT HAD MADE IT BACK TO EL-AYOUN. SOVIETS HAD FURNISHED THE WEAPONS IN QUESTION TO POLISARIO, IN KING'S VIEW. HE DISCOUNTED POLISARIO ABILITY TO UTILIZE SOPHISTICATED WEAPONS, IMPLYING NON-SAHARANS NEEDED TO OPERATE THEM.

5. VADM TURNER, AFTER REVIEWING COMPOSITION AND DISPOSITION OF SIXTH FLEET, ASKED HOW THE FLEET MIGHT BE USEFUL TO MOROCCO. KING EXPRESSED INTEREST IN OBTAINING INTELLIGENCE ON SOVIET SHIP MOVEMENTS IN ATLANTIC OFF MOROCCO, MAURITANIA AND ANGOLA. KING WENT ON TO STRESS IMPORTANCE OF CONTINUED IMPLEMENTATION OF OUR MILITARY SUPPLY PROGRAM AND REITERATED HIS RECENT REQUEST FOR RAPID DELIVERY OF F-5 AIRCRAFT (SEE RABAT 0122 NOTAL). MOROCCO WOULD THUS, IN CONJUNCTION WITH PRESENCE OF SIXTH FLEET, BE ABLE TO CONTRIBUTE TO DETERRENCE OF ANY SOVIET-SPONSORED

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ADVENTURES IN THE IMMEDIATE AREA. KING ALSO STATED THAT VISITS BY U.S. NUCLEAR-POWERED SUBMARINES WOULD BE WELCOME AT ANY TIME.

6. VADM TURNER WENT ON TO EXPLAIN NEED OF SIXTH FLEET TO CONDUCT SIMULATED AMPHIBIOUS EXERCISES (WITHOUT ACTUALLY LANDING), PARTICULARLY IN ORDER TO BE PREPARED TO CARRY OUT ANY REQUIRED EVACUATIONS. KING DISPLAYED INTEREST IN THIS SUBJECT AND

INDICATED HE WAS PREPARED TO RESPOND QUICKLY TO A REQUEST FOR SUCH EXERCISES IN MOROCCO, ASKING THAT ANY SUCH REQUEST SPELL OUT SPECIFICS AND INVOLVE SHORT DURATION IN REMOTE PLACES. HE VIEWED U.S. ACTIVITY OF THIS NATURE AS FITTING IN WITH NEED TO DETER SOVIETS.

7. COMMENT: IT DIFFICULT TO JUDGE TO WHAT EXTENT KING'S EMPHASIS ON SOVIETS MIGHT BE DESIGNED FOR OUR EARS. IN ANY CASE, RISING TENSIONS WITH ALGERIA -- AND KING'S RELATED PREOCCUPATION WITH SOVIET MACHINATIONS -- HAVE OPENED UP NEW OPPORTUNITIES FOR GAINS FOR U.S. INTERESTS, SUCH AS INAUGURATION OF NUCLEAR-POWERED SHIP VISIT, STEPPED-UP INTELLIGENCE COOPERATION, AND EVEN NAVAL EXERCISES OFF THE COAST. KING OBVIOUSLY HOPING FOR TANGIBLE QUID PRO QUO, INTER ALIA IN FORM OF PROVISION RELATIVELY SOON OF F-5'S. HE ALSO UNDOUBTEDLY FORESEES IMPROVED DETERRENCE OF ALGERIA AS WELL AS USSR SIMPLY IN INCREASED U.S. VISIBILITY ON MOROCCAN SCENE. WASHINGTON IS OF COURSE IN BEST POSITION TO WEIGH POTENTIAL GAINS IN MOROCCO IN TERMS OF IMPACT ON U.S. INTERESTS AT LARGE. MEANWHILE, PROSPECTS FOR FUTURE BILATERAL RELATIONS CONTINUE DEFINITELY ON UPSWING.
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NOTE BY OC/T: NOT PASSED SECRETARY'S PARTY

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